

LATIN NOTES

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So many requests for suggestions regarding the content of the Latin course in the second and third years are received by the BUREAU that it has seemed desirable to devote one issue of the NOTES to this important question. The articles that follow express the personal opinions of the writers and are doubtless largely dictated by experience in the type of school in which the author is working. However, they will prove stimulating to teachers at large.

READING CONTENT OF THE LATIN COURSE

The freedom which the new definition of the Latin requirement promises the schools can be realized, so far as the third year of the course is concerned, only if the publishers furnish new material suitable for the reading of that year. We should have a large number of editions of single speeches of Cicero and of selections from Cicero and other writers—so large a number that teachers would be tempted to change the reading from year to year, both for the sake of widening their own acquaintance with the literature and to avoid the use of translations and "cribbed" books. Editions of this sort are used generally in teaching the classics in English schools and in teaching the modern foreign languages in American schools. Of course the books should be cheap, and it may be that a way will be found to reduce their cost when the word-list of the College Examination Board is ready. I have in mind the expense of printing the same words in the vocabularies of all the books that would be used.

Variety would do much to stimulate the interest of our pupils, and I myself believe it advantageous to read some poetry, particularly Ovid, each year after the first. The arrangement cannot, however, be made to fit any feasible plan of examination by the Board, except for pupils who are to take Latin Cp. 4, and is impracticable where any considerable number of pupils study part of their Latin in one school and part in another.

There is very slight correspondence between the now accepted objectives of Latin study and some of the recent proposals for reading, but the recommendation that at least one semester of the third year be given to Cicero is thoroughly sound. For my part, I am inclined to think that most of the reading of the year should be Ciceronian. It is not necessary, of course, to draw upon the speeches exclusively, or even chiefly. A whole semester might profitably be spent on selections so short that each would be grasped by pupils as a whole. There might be included the stories which Cicero tells by way of illustration, some of his letters and passages showing his treatment of many diverse subjects and the range of his intellectual interests.

I suppose that the second semester should be given over to the reading of some of the orations, but even these need not be presented in their entirety; or if so presented, may be put before the pupil partly in translation. I am thinking of immature pupils, whose interest in a long piece of argumentation cannot, perhaps, be sustained, but I am not sure that any but the most immature should study the speeches only piecemeal.

Most of the speeches now read in American schools are worthy of their place, but too much time has been given to the Catilinarian conspiracy. Indeed, many

boys and girls are led to believe that this was the greatest event in Roman history. The first and second Catilinarian orations are not worth reading, and time can be afforded for only one of the others. Of equal importance for an understanding of Cicero's political career are the prosecution of Verres and the struggle against Antony. American schoolbooks now offer, in various combinations, the orations against Catiline, for the Manilian Law, for Archias, for Marcellus, against Verres (short selections), for Roscius, for Murena, for Ligarius, for Milo, and the fourth, ninth, and fourteenth Philippic. Something can be said in favor of all of this material, and there is rather a large choice; but the editions are so expensive that pupils cannot be asked to buy more than one, and this fact at once narrows the choice, or even fixes the reading for the year.

The report of the commission which formulated the new definition recommends selections from Pliny, Sallust, and Livy for reading in the third year, and it is intended that the word-list for that year shall not be narrowly Caesarian and Ciceronian. No one, however, can say at this time just what reading outside of Cicero will prove to be suitable. It is never anything but loss to vary the reading of a class to such a degree that there does not come rather early in the year a time when most of the words are familiar to the pupils. This loss consists chiefly in inability to center attention on the thought, but there is loss also when pupils are daily called upon to get the meaning of many words which they will not see again, or not see until they have forgotten them.

—JOHN C. KIRTLAND
The Phillips Exeter Academy
Exeter, New Hampshire

REMARKS ON A REVISION OF THE NEW YORK STATE SYLLABUS

Let me begin my reply to your request for an expression of opinion on the content of the Latin curriculum with a view to possible revision of the New York State Syllabus by quoting from the *Report of the Classical Investigation* (Part 1, pp. 248 and 249) a paragraph that to my mind sounds the keynote for our needs at this time.

"The reconstitution of the course must be effected within the close time limits allowed in the secondary schools. The amount of material now included in the course is too large to be well taught within the time available and is not as suitably adapted as it should be and might be to the successive stages of progress of the pupils. These two factors produce the present congestion and imperfect distribution of material and therefore continually operate to hinder the attainment

of satisfactory results. *A reduction in the amount of material* (the italics are mine) *will relieve the congestion and make it practicable to teach the lessened amount better.* A modification and better distribution of the material will make it practicable to realize the aims of the course in much fuller measure. In this way the faults which inhere in the present constitution of the course can be eradicated."

The interdependence of objectives, content, and method in any outline of a course of study needs no comment. The content, however, seems to me to be the pivot around which the other two factors turn. No matter how sound our objectives may be, if the material used to attain those objectives is not arranged so as to make them easy of attainment, results will not only be unsatisfactory but also completely demoralizing. The *Report* emphasizes the need for well-trained teachers. Let us assume that our young teachers are well-trained and filled with enthusiasm coming from an understanding of correct methods of procedure to attain desired objectives. Then place in their hands tools which they find it hard to use in order to reach their goal. What is the result? They soon begin to feel that the aims which they were so anxious to carry out are aims in theory only—impossible of attainment. This surely puts a damper on their enthusiasm.

Now this is a real situation in our schools today. Our aims are worthy of any scheme of education adapted to present needs and yet we cast them to the winds because we fail to make it possible *to do a little and to do that little well.*

Consider, for example, our historical-cultural aims. Who can refute their value? And yet what is the cry? "We do not find time to do them justice." My program for improvement of content differs very little, if it differs at all, from the recommendations of the *Report*. I favor its emphasis on mastery of the elements of the language—forms, syntax, vocabulary—and its suggested distribution of these phases of our work in the various terms, so that there may be an attainable minimum in each term, encouraging in its possibilities for thoroughness of method. I favor the *Report's* emphasis on introduction in the course at the earliest possible moment of connected reading to be continued throughout the course in accordance with a plan that is in essence well-ordered as to progressive difficulty.

At this point I should like to say a word on connected reading in the first year. I feel that exercises in beginners' books should not be set apart from the grammatical material in each lesson. With books that have such an arrangement teachers are prone to postpone reading material in order to cover the grammar and very often the connected reading is neglected or reduced in amount to a point that is detrimental to the program for acquisition of power to read and comprehend Latin. I believe (and some of the latest beginners' books have already caught the idea) that the connected reading material should be *incorporated in and made an essential part* of each lesson. In this way we may be sure that this phase of our work will be accomplished. To insure thoroughness of drill in essentials, there should be ample distributive repetition of forms, syntax, and vocabulary in the connected reading. One of the reasons why pupils have so much trouble with vocabulary in the reading of classical authors is that we have comparatively little of this distributive repetition in vocabulary. There is plenty of it in paradigms, a fair amount in syntax, but hardly enough in vocabulary. Beginners' books should be prepared and selected to fulfill this need.

Furthermore, I am in accord with the emphasis on reading material that provides ample opportunity for discussion and comment on historical-cultural phases of our program. And now I come to what I consider extremely important. Since most teachers feel that they would like to do justice to historical-cultural

phases in connection with the reading of a classical author, where so many opportunities present themselves for adequate treatment, I favor the postponement of the reading of a classical author till the fourth term and a *material reduction of the amount read* (as suggested by the *Report*) in order that there may be time for the attainment of historical-cultural objectives and in order that these may become objectives *in fact* as well as in theory. I feel that with *a little reading* carefully digested from this standpoint, pupils will begin to appreciate what the course aims to present and that with this feeling will come a sense of mastery and interest to do more. Good teaching consists in arousing curiosity to know more about a subject than is possible in covering ground imperfectly and in trying to bite off more than one can chew—a procedure which is largely responsible for the dropping out of so many pupils from our subject and for many of the justifiable attacks against our methods. I say methods designedly, for I do not feel that our opponents attack our subject so much as they attack our methods, and our methods are vitally connected with the content of our course and the distribution and arrangement of that content.

Up to this point I have been speaking of a curriculum which it will be possible for pupils of at least average ability to absorb. I strongly feel that in the revision of our curriculum we must give considerable thought to the problem of individual differences in the ability of pupils. We must arrange courses for those who can and will profit by one year of study as well as for those who can and will profit by two. We cannot afford, since our subject is in the last analysis a difficult one, to ignore this important phase of modern educational trend.

Then, too, we ought to revise our testing program considerably. An encouraging attempt has already been made by Mr. Thompson, State Supervisor of Classical Languages, in the direction of standardized achievement tests on minimum essentials. More of this should be looked for. Above all, our testing ought to give a truer picture of what our real aims in teaching are, particularly with reference to their relative valuation. We cannot get away from this point: The content of our examinations and the proper evaluation of their parts are vitally tied up with what we consider our aims to be, and it goes without saying that the right kind of testing will encourage teachers in their presentation to place the emphasis where it belongs and will stimulate pupils to strive to attain what we feel is worth while for them to master.

In conclusion, I should like to call attention to what has already become common knowledge among teachers of Latin. The College Entrance Examination Board in its recommendations for 1928 has done away with prescribed reading and has planned to lay more emphasis on acquired power in the reading and comprehension of Latin as well as on familiarity with the historical-cultural background. Have we not all been welcoming this innovation? Will those who will have the last word in the revision of our syllabus have the courage to follow this lead? Will they, if they fear that some of the smaller schools of the state will "run wild" without *some prescription* of the amount of required reading, at least *materially reduce* the amount of reading in the interest of fairness to ourselves and educational justice to those who come under our charge?

—MICHAEL SOLOMON, *Chairman Latin Department*
De Witt Clinton High School, New York City

IN REPLY TO AN INQUIRY REGARDING THE REVISION OF THE NEW YORK STATE SYLLABUS

The whole Latin Syllabus is hopelessly behind the age. We are shackled by it. The world has changed, the student body has changed, in the placement of interest, in the power of concentration, and in the importance assigned to subjects.

Yet, with minor modifications, we continue to follow

the same specifications as twenty-five years ago. This is foolish.

In the first year the amount of inflections and grammar should be reduced, but the amount of reading should be increased. This reading should be made Latin, carefully graded to suit the pupil's limited and increasing power. The relation of Latin to English, and the customs and life of the Romans should receive greater attention.

In the second year the study of the inflections and grammar, of the relation of Latin to English, and of the institutions of the Romans should be continued. A large amount of made or modified Latin should be read. Material dealing with the development of the Roman people historically, and biographical material should be sought and used.

Caesar should not be read. It is contrary to the spirit of our time that pupils should be required to study for a whole year a work which has for its subject the subjugation and punishment of unoffending peoples through war and devastation.

In the third year selections may be read from Cicero's Letters and Orations, such as Catiline I, III and IV, Sallust, and perhaps Pliny's Letters.

In the fourth year selections may be read and studied from Caesar, Livy, Ovid and Vergil.

Throughout the course the aim should be to develop power to read Latin, carefully graded and of increasing difficulty, as the pupil's knowledge of vocabulary, inflections, and syntax grows. The tests should be tests of power. Only in the fourth year should there be tests of the intensive study of passages of Latin prose and poetry noted for beauty of expression or thought.

Throughout the course there should be a prescribed vocabulary arranged by terms. This vocabulary for the first two years should contain as many of the words to be used in the prose reading of the third and fourth years as the limitations of inflections and grammar in those years permit. The other words in the vocabulary of the first two years should have to do with objects and acts within the comprehension or experience of the pupils in these years. The vocabulary of the third and fourth years should be based on the reading of those years. Two thousand words should be the maximum for a prescribed vocabulary. Frequency in use as shown by linguistic study should be the basis of selection.

Throughout the course appropriate emphasis should be put upon translation from English into Latin. The words used should be those found in the prescribed vocabulary that occur in the prose Latin read in the third and fourth years. With these should be used, as far as practicable, in the translation from English into Latin of the first and second years, the words in the prescribed vocabulary for these years that have to do with concrete objects or familiar acts. The aim should be to clarify and fix in the pupil's mind the syntax studied from term to term.

—HIRAM H. BICE, *Chairman of Latin Department*
George Washington High School, New York City

REVISION OF THE NEW YORK STATE LATIN SYLLABUS

Regarding the reorganization of Latin study in secondary schools, I agree heartily and completely with the views presented in the *General Report of the Classical Investigation*, pages 257-262, which states (page 259) that "The way to arrange matters to the satisfaction of all concerned is to organize a six-year course in two cycles, the earlier three-year cycle being of a more general, and the later three-year cycle being of a more special nature."

Perhaps there was a time when the traditional Latin course, developed in foreign college preparatory schools, was appropriate for the American public high school, but it is certainly poorly adapted for our typical high schools today. We have taken a six-year, highly technical course, designed several centuries ago to train

the sons of English gentlemen to read and write Latin fluently as a regular feature of their daily life, and have tried to cram this course in four years into the heads of American public school children of today, whose inheritance, environment, aims, and inclinations are vastly different from those of the pupils for whom the course was originally designed. To make matters worse, we have adopted as the preparation for this high speed, high gear high school course a slow moving, low gear, low caste elementary school curriculum, designed for lower class German children whose whole education was to consist of eight years in the *Volkschule*! Had the bitterest and cleverest enemy of Latin deliberately planned a course to wreck the subject and drive it in disgrace from the public schools, he could hardly have found a method more suitable for his purpose than our regular program in high school Latin.

"Ours is the only important nation in the western civilized world which allows secondary education to begin so late and contents itself generally with only four years. This largely accounts for the undoubtedly fact, noted again and again by those who have studied the situation, that our boys and girls at the end of their secondary schooling are practically two years behind those who are of about the same age on finishing their secondary schooling in other leading countries. *This is a great public loss.*"¹

The Classical Investigation has shown conclusively the fundamental weakness of our Latin course, and has suggested the general direction which reform must take. We now need another investigation to begin where the first stopped, and to prepare a definite and complete program for the six-year Latin course. Unless college entrance requirements are changed, the last three years of the course will probably remain substantially in the form recommended in the *Report of the Classical Investigation*, pages 144-151. The work of the present first year will have to be distributed over the first three years, enriched by a much greater amount of word study, English grammar, supplementary reading, and drill on the fundamentals of Latin grammar, which very few ever master under our present system. With such a program it will be possible to offer every child the unquestionable advantages which a thorough knowledge of elementary Latin affords in the study of English, reserving the technicalities of Latin for the last three years, for which pupils will then be really prepared. We shall then be free in the first three years to plan a Latin course on a broad, liberal basis, employing Latin not as an end in itself, but as an integrating, essential element in training children for happy and useful citizenship.

—CLYDE R. JEFFORDS

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¹*Latin Investigation Report*, p. 260

SUGGESTIONS ON THE CONTENT OF THIRD-YEAR LATIN

There are, to my mind, two principles that should guide us in the selection of reading matter for the third year of a course in Latin. These are variety of content and movement and a feeling of progress on the part of the student, with the implicit corollary of real interest and enthusiasm.

To insure variety, we must postulate the condition of innovation. It is time that we realize the lack of psychological and pedagogical insight on the part of those who inflicted upon adolescents one whole year of Cicero, an author with a mature mind and with a mature outlook. Erasmus might enjoy him as a boy, but the prolongation of infancy, almost in a literal sense, precludes that enjoyment in these days. There is scarcely a point of common contact between reader and content, and the interest of the student is usually merely simulated. At the most, intensive study for one year of one author results in making the student more or less familiar with that one author. Pupils

leave high school with the idea that Latin consists of milestones: First year, a painful grammatical initiation; Second year, Caesar; Third year, Cicero; Fourth year, Vergil, and the rest is silence.

A pupil gets some fragmentary acquaintance with Caesar, and Livy is not even a name to him. He labors through Cicero, but does not hear that Plautus wrote *Broadway* comedies, that Catullus is the prototype of Burns, that Martial's quips are still applicable, that Apuleius' picaresque novel ought to be a "best-seller."

To remedy this system of ploughing a lonely furrow so abortively and marking time, I would offer selections of a number of authors in different literary fields. The pupil will feel the chronological movement. He will find out that Latin is not merely a limited number of three names, and he will not stagnate in a morass of syntax, but will enter into real Roman thought and feel the breathing life of the ancients, the "sweep and surge" of it. There are some who, upon hearing the mention of "selections," immediately think with horror of the "disiecta membra" of the victims. But there is not the least harm, in fact, there is positive good in a selection, provided that it be a unit in itself and of sufficient length and interest. With this proviso, I would outline a course in third-year Latin as follows:

The selections should be preceded by a brief biographical and literary notice. Notes should be strictly relevant and not excessive in number. Vocabularies need not be bulky, only the less common words being explained. Pupils should be taught to use a dictionary. A selection should not be excluded merely because it contains uncommon words not included in the Syllabus. These considerations are pre-requisites. Instead of the Manilian Law, the first speech *In Verrem* might be read, and a selection from the Letters. With the Catilinarian speeches, parts of Sallust should be studied. The *Pro Archia* might be omitted. To offset Caesar, there is much in Livy not too difficult, and Quintus Curtius is easily adaptable and offers interesting matter. The short and simpler poems of Propertius, Martial, and Phaedrus are not beyond the capacity of the third year. A scene from the *Miles Gloriosus*, together with an innocuous sketch from Petronius, and one of the robber scenes from Apuleius would be a revelation to Latin students.

I can hear objections and reservations, but I am convinced that they are easily overcome, and I would myself be prepared to compile such a selection.

—HARRY E. WEDECK
Seward Park High School, New York City

The Third Year

Now that high school Latin teachers—or rather, Latin teachers in such high schools as are still fortunate enough to have classes in third year Latin at all—have been released from the bondage of "six orations of Cicero, including the four against Catiline" to the freedom of "an amount of classical Latin equivalent to not less than 60 pages of Teubner text," we find in the matter of content in the third year *quot magistri, tot sententiae*. Personally, I favor a solid backbone of Cicero's works, with composition based on them, running throughout the year, because of the great influence of Cicero upon the literary style of his contemporaries and successors. I should include each year the Archias oration, one or two of the speeches against Catiline, and several of the letters. For the additional speech or speeches to be read, I should prefer to make a new choice each year according to the makeup of the class, and should try to keep my own reading freshened by these changes. If necessary, I should make my own sentences for composition work, based on the oration in hand. The philosophical writings of Cicero seem to me hardly effective for high school pupils, and rather to be postponed for the riper college years in the case of pupils who plan to go on; for others, one can find good

material more immediate in its appeal. With such a basic course I should want to combine a large amount of daily sight reading in other Roman prose writers, early and late, together with a little work on the history of Latin prose literature. For this I should use one of the many available books of selections, and should require the pupil to leave the book in the classroom, so that it could be used for sight work alone. Of the other prose authors, I should want to include especially the humorously serious, vividly alive, and by no means prohibitively difficult letters of Pliny the Younger. If the class in any given year were definitely not planning to go on with Latin, I might include a little of Vergil or Ovid, to give a taste of Latin poetry; for the most part, however, I should prefer to devote the year entirely to prose.

—LILLIAN B. LAWLER
—University of Kansas

SCHOLARSHIP OR METHODS? WHY NOT BOTH?

A quotation from the last page of an unpublished article by a leading teacher of Latin.

"In conclusion, I should urge every teacher to be interested in methods to the extent at least of reading the *Classical Journal*, the *Classical Weekly*, the *Latin Notes* published by the SERVICE BUREAU FOR CLASSICAL TEACHERS at Teachers College, New York City, and the various bulletins published by our own University. But do not be too enthusiastic over "methods" or the classical intelligentsia will suspect you of deficiency in scholarship. This summer I made the fatal error of going too far in this direction and enrolling in a Teachers' Course in Latin at a Western University, hoping to glean a few new ideas from class discussions, if not from the professor. The latter drove all the graduate students from the class after two days by making frequent public remarks to the effect that it was *appalling* to think that a graduate student would enrol in a methods class; that if we did not have our methods established after ten years' experience, it would be better for us to give up teaching Latin.

We all know that methods do not take the place of scholarship on the part of the teacher and hard work on the part of the pupil. But many a fine scholar has failed as a teacher for lack of method, and many a weak student has been saved through the methods employed by the teacher."

NOTICE

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